UNITED NATIONS

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Secretariat

ST/AI/382
3 March 1993

ADMINISTRATIVE INSTRUCTION

To: Members of the staff

From: The Director of Personnel

Subject: SPECIAL MEASURES TO IMPROVE THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE SECRETARIAT*

1. The purpose of the present instruction is to inform staff of the special remedial measures, effective immediately, intended to implement the Secretary-General's goal of bringing the gender balance in policy-level positions as close to 50-50 as possible by the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations.

2. The Organization has in the past fallen short in its obligations under Article 8 of the Charter, resulting in a gender imbalance, particularly at the higher levels, that under normal procedures would take decades to eliminate. To bring the composition of the Secretariat into harmony with the fundamental principles of equality for which the Organization stands will require exceptional measures to recruit, promote and deploy women who fully meet the requirements of Article 101 of the Charter, in the shortest possible time. These measures will remain in effect until the Secretary-General is satisfied that substantial progress towards parity has been made.

3. Since the present gender distribution within the Secretariat does not provide a sufficient pool of women candidates who could be promoted to higher-level posts within the time-frame set by the Secretary-General, the following special provisions are intended to increase the pool of qualified women available for consideration in all decisions on appointment and promotion, particularly to higher-level posts. Effective immediately, qualified women currently in the service of the Organization under any type of appointment, including 200 series appointments or as consultants, with a good

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* Personnel Manual index No. 1175.

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performance record and at least one year's experience in the United Nations system, including United Nations programmes, shall be regarded as internal candidates for available Professional vacancies. Similar considerations will apply, in accordance with staff regulation 4.4, to qualified women serving with specialized agencies and subsidiary organs within the common system. Women who have served at least one year within the previous three years, under any type of appointment, may be included in a special pool for priority consideration.

4. Each department and office will be responsible for maintaining statistics showing the current distribution of women and men at each level, and their projected proportions for the following two years. All recommendations for filling posts, whether by recruitment, extension or promotion, must be accompanied by an explanation of how the recommended action will affect the net representation of women at the level concerned and overall.

5. In accordance with the Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/252 of 20 October 1992, in departments and offices with less than 35 per cent women overall and in those with less than 25 per cent women at levels P-5 and above, vacancies overall and in the latter group, respectively, shall be filled, when there are one or more female candidates whose qualifications match all the requirements for a vacant post, by one of those candidates. Provided the candidate meets the requirements of the Charter, the criteria for advancement should stress performance and potential and not simply nominal qualifications and seniority in grade. The cumulative seniority provisions endorsed by the Secretary-General in 1986 and set out in the guidelines for the 1986 promotion review should be applied.

6. Particular efforts should be made in departments and offices that do not meet either the 35 per cent overall level or the 25 per cent level in the senior grades. The Office of Human Resources Management will assist all departments and offices to locate, for consideration, qualified women candidates from outside the department or office, including internal candidates as defined in paragraph 3 above. In filling vacancies at levels P-5 and above, departments and offices that do not meet the 25 per cent level will be required to demonstrate that they have considered both qualified internal candidates, as defined above, and qualified external candidates, who may be appointed for the purpose of these special measures as an exception to the recruitment freeze.

7. The same policy shall apply to all recruitment after the current freeze has been lifted. Vacancies that occur in departments and offices that do not meet the required percentages of women both overall and at the higher levels will not be available for the appointment of male candidates until serious efforts have been made in good faith to identify and secure a qualified woman. Where male and female candidates have equivalent merit and suitability, preference shall be given to a woman candidate. The post will become available for male recruitment only after it has been vacant for 12 months and despite the best efforts of all concerned, as certified by the Office of Human Resources Management, it has not been possible to identify or

secure a qualified woman candidate during this period. It is therefore in the interests of both the department and the Organization as a whole to start the search for women candidates well before the vacancy is likely to occur. The other exception to the policy favouring women in recruitment is when the post is being filled through a competitive examination.

8. In view of the priority which the Secretary-General has given to the improvement of gender distribution, in appropriate cases consideration will be given to waiving time-consuming procedural requirements, such as external vacancy circulation, where fully qualified and suitable women candidates have already been identified from the roster or other direct source of recruitment.